

22 June 1988
OCA 2121-88

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Hearing on U.S. Policy Options Toward South Africa,
Day One

1. On 22 June 1988, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations began three days of hearings on the above-captioned topic. Testifying were Senators Jesse Helms (R-NC), Edward Kennedy (D-MA) Lowell Weicker (R-CT), and Steven Symms (R-ID), followed by Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead. The termination of military and intelligence cooperation was never discussed and the hearing focused on political issues. Below is a summary of the main points discussed.

2. Senator Pell convened the hearing by stating that it aims to clarify the issues in the debate on ways the United States can combat apartheid. Senator Simon said that apartheid will go. The question is whether it will occur peacefully or not and the U.S. should be on the side of it leaving peacefully. The Administration has been dragging its feet on sanctions, but the overwhelming evidence is that South African blacks strongly support them. He does not think the Senate has the votes to override a veto now. Cranston stated that constructive engagement still lives and there is little choice as to how to proceed.

3. Senator Helms relayed accounts of brutality in the ANC camps. He has introduced S. 1658 to repeal the existing sanctions, which have fallen most heavily on the group with the least economic strength. South Africa is literally on the front line against Soviet imperialism and the United States ignores this at its own peril. It is unrealistic to expect a major political change in a country faced with an imminent Soviet threat. The U.S. should help remove the Soviets.

4. Cranston said the White House is "wimpy" on the subject of apartheid. The inconsistency bothers him, that is, the treatment of South Africa vs. the treatment of other countries. He asked if Helms did not support sanctions against the

Sandinistas. Helms said one is a communist country, in case Cranston did not know that. He suggested Cranston go to South Africa and see the conditions there, as he has done. Cranston asked if Helms believes there will be majority rule in South Africa some day. Helms said yes, but not by rhetoric.

5. Kassebaum asked Helms if he said that there is protection of political freedom in South Africa. She understood him to say yes. He said he did not say this.

6. Kennedy said that § 501 of the 1986 law states that the U.S. is to impose additional sanctions if there has not been enough progress made against apartheid within a certain time. None of the goals outlined in the act have been fulfilled. There is increased repression against and harassment of blacks. The policy should be consistent with moral values and be effective. He cited the 1986 sanctions against Libya as a precedent for action against South Africa, saying that there is a need to pay attention to U.S. blacks and the message to be sent to them.

7. Weicker is a co-sponsor of Kennedy's bill. He said concerted international action is needed against South Africa. All that is asked is to stay the course.

8. Symms is a co-sponsor of Helms' bill. "Constructive disengagement" has failed. U.S. business and national security interests will suffer most from the sanctions, which are hurting the very people who should be helped. He spoke of Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, to emphasize the point that South Africa is not an "evil empire." The 1986 sanctions threaten U.S. security.

9. Helms spoke of the need for South Africa's strategic minerals. If South Africa is left out, all other countries producing them cannot meet the U.S.' needs. Further, the U.S. would need them much more than they would need the U.S.

10. Whitehead appeared with Charles Freeman. Whitehead said that if the bill is enacted, there will be important consequences for South Africa. The Administration strongly opposes it. Over the past 10 years, the nature of apartheid has changed for the better. There is a growing awareness that apartheid is impractical and not economical, if not immoral. U.S. pressure alone cannot accelerate change. The problem with sanctions is the misreading of South African political and economic realities. It is the wrong tool brought to do the wrong job. South Africa has been preparing for the sanctions for years. U.S. business will have to find new markets for manufactured and high technology goods. There may also be changes to the constitutionality of the provision for confiscation of assets. There is no quick solution to South Africa's crisis. The need to

accept leverage is limited; South Africa can survive, even thrive, without the U.S. It is wrong for this Administration to commit the U.S. to new sanctions shortly before a new Administration will come in.

11. Senator Pressler has written questions about the situation in Namibia. He praised Whitehead's statement of policy.

12. Simon asked if it is the position of the Administration that it will try to live within the spirit of the law. He said Freeman's response would stretch the law every way possible to avoid sanctions. He compared Whitehead's arguments with those against desegregation. Whitehead challenged Simon to find any positive change from the sanctions. Simon said they gave a signal of hope to blacks in South Africa and changed the image of the U.S. in black South Africa.

13. Kerry said he wants changes, but is not sure what they should be. He has not co-sponsored any legislation. He asked if there is any indication by South Africa that they will end apartheid and Whitehead responded in the negative. There is no feeling they can take pressure off of South Africa, according to Whitehead. Pressure from the world community has led to changes. More change will be gradual; it will take years to come. Kerry asked if we have years to wait. Whitehead said he does not know how much time is left; time is not on our side.

14. Simon said the last time a regime was openly racist was under Hitler. The U.S. had a policy of constructive engagement then, but did not call it that. He asked what the U.S. is doing to get other countries to put on pressure. Whitehead said that blacks in South Africa are not interested in images and symbols, but rather in jobs and votes.

15. Pell asked what alternatives there are, besides sanctions, short of military intervention. Freeman said the U.S. should remain involved on the ground and keep private sector programs going.

16. Simon told Whitehead that although he agreed with a number of things Whitehead said, he completely agrees with the need for assistance to the frontline states.

17. The hearing is scheduled to continue over the next two days.

Legislation Division
Office of Congressional Affairs

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